

Dear Blossom. I loved the old brown mare. Mature and steady, she and I were a good team, doing small jobs together, like bringing in hay and carting turnips.

At first, a raw recruit land girl, I collided with a few gate posts. Why do farmers make gates the exact width of carts? I soon learned that if I let the reins go slack, dear old Blossom would take us safely through.

When she was semi-retired and put out to grass, the big grey percher, Fanny, became my work partner. She was taller than the Clydesdales, and had large floundery feet with hairy fringes. By this time, negotiating gates was no problem. Fanny was a willing worker, but a wee bit impulsive. When we were carting turnips, I would say 'hup!' when I wanted her to move on. She would gallop on several yards before obeying my anguished 'woh!' so I had to throw the turnips farther to reach the cart. I found it was best to lead her on, walking at her head.

One of my dreaded obstacles in winter was the wooden bridge over the Big Ditch, more like a rushing river on this day. As Fanny and I negotiated the wet greasy planks, her hooves slipped and she floundered. I was at her head and we were almost safely across. The cart and its contents tipped towards the water. Luckily Alec, the ploughman, was working nearby and came to our rescue. The big mare was none the worse of her mishap. I must confess I felt it was my fault and I was shattered by the incident.

I would sometimes walk to the grassy field where Blossom spent her last summer. She would come to the fence to greet me. One evening my dear old pal did not appear. Then I saw her lying spread out some distance away. I ran over with thumping heart. Dear Blossom, she looked so peaceful, still warm, but I knew she was gone. I sat with her for a while, stroked her dear head, shed a few tears. Then I rose and went back to the steading to tell my sad news.